

# Active or Passive? (Part II)



tricks in all. This compares with the three it would have made if you waited for partner to get in to continue the suit.

♠ K 7 5							
♥ K Q 6							
♦ A 10 3 2							
♣ A K 2							
		♠ A Q J					
		♥ J 10 9 3					
		♦ 8 6					
		♣ Q J 8 5					
	<table border="1"> <tr><td>N</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>S</td></tr> </table>	N	E	W	S		
N	E						
W	S						

The bidding and the play to the first trick are the same as on the previous deal. Do you continue spades again or is it better to switch?

The shape of the dummy gives you a major clue. There is no long suit any more – instead, a lifeless 3-3-4-3 shape. Moreover, the one suit declarer might have – clubs – you have well held. This suggests that there is no rush to set up the spade suit. A further reason not to try to set up the spades is that partner may have no entry. A safe switch to the jack of hearts is in order.

This is the full deal:

		♠ K 7 5						
		♥ K Q 6						
		♦ A 10 3 2						
		♣ A K 2						
♠ 10 8 6 4			♠ A Q J					
♥ 7 5 4 2			♥ J 10 9 3					
♦ K 9 7 5			♦ 8 6					
♣ 6			♣ Q J 8 5					
	<table border="1"> <tr><td>N</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>S</td></tr> </table>	N	E	W	S			
N	E							
W	S							
		♠ 9 3 2						
		♥ A 8						
		♦ Q J 4						
		♣ 10 9 7 4 3						

After your passive heart switch, declarer can make eight tricks with ease: three tricks in each red suit and the ace and king of clubs. The ninth trick, however, will prove singularly elusive. It is a different story, of course, if you return a spade. That king of spades will be the ninth trick.

I mentioned how your club holding would frustrate declarer's attempts to set up the club suit. Indeed, in a no-trump contract, one often has to consider the possibility of length in declarer's hand. Often, though not always, the bidding provides the clue.

*Continued on page 26 ►*

Last month we considered the very important topic of whether to conduct a busy or passive defence in suit contracts. In a busy or active defence you attack suits where declarer might be weak even at the risk of blowing a trick if partner does not have the hoped-for holding. With a passive defence you lead suits in which one side or the other has a solid holding or those in which the previous play of the suit has determined how many tricks each suit can take.

Now we examine the same issue in no-trump contracts. Most textbooks say that the majority of no-trump contracts revolve around a race between declarer and the defenders to knock out opposing stoppers and set up their tricks first. This is probably true but it is quite often better to sit back and let the other side make the running. As was the case with suit contracts, a key indicator for an active defence is the presence of a threatening suit in dummy.

♠ K 7 5							
♥ A Q							
♦ Q J 9 7 3 2							
♣ A Q							
		♠ A Q J					
		♥ 10 8 6 5					
		♦ 8 6					
		♣ J 8 5 2					
	<table border="1"> <tr><td>N</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>S</td></tr> </table>	N	E	W	S		
N	E						
W	S						

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
pass	1♦	Pass	1NT
	3NT	End	

West leads the four of spades, dummy plays low, you win with jack and South plays the two. Do you switch, so that dummy's king of spades will not score, or do you return a spade?

A glance at dummy should tell you the answer. Any finesse declarer needs against a king in partner's hand will work and there are plenty of entries in dummy to set up the diamond suit. If you defend passively, declarer is almost certainly going to make at least nine tricks. These are five diamonds (assuming West has one stopper), two hearts and two clubs.

A far better bet is to cash the ace of spades and continue with the queen. So long as the lead comes from a five-card suit and partner turns up with a top diamond, this should defeat the contract. It should also work whenever passive defence would. Partner would need both top diamonds, so your side would score three spades (at least) and two diamonds. This is the full deal:

		♠ K 7 5						
		♥ A Q						
		♦ Q J 9 7 3 2						
		♣ A Q						
♠ 10 8 6 4 3			♠ A Q J					
♥ K 7 4 2			♥ 10 8 6 5					
♦ K 5			♦ 8 6					
♣ 10 7			♣ J 8 5 2					
	<table border="1"> <tr><td>N</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>S</td></tr> </table>	N	E	W	S			
N	E							
W	S							
		♠ 9 2						
		♥ J 9 3						
		♦ A 10 4						
		♣ K 9 6 4 3						

The investment of conceding a trick to the king of spades comes back with interest. Your side scores four spade

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*Clues from the bidding*

♠ A K J 9 5 4					
♥ 10 7					
♦ A Q					
♣ J 5 4					
	♠ Q 10 6 2				
	♥ J 9 4 3				
	♦ 9 3				
	♣ K 6 3				
<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td><td style="padding: 2px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W</td><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	E	W	S	
N	E				
W	S				

West	North	East	South
Pass	3♠	Pass	3♦
End			3NT

Partner leads the ten of clubs and declarer plays low from dummy. What are your thoughts here?

The normal play in clubs – in case the lead comes from either Q-10-9-x(x), or 10-9-8-x(x) or 10-9-7-x(x) – is to let the ten run. This may save a trick on any of those layouts. If the lead is from A-10-9-x(x), then declarer has a single club stopper whether you put up the king or not.

If you consider only dummy's long suit, you will think this is a hand for normal defence, letting the ten run. You have the spades well held and have no rush to take tricks quickly on that score. Now think back to the bidding. South has announced a six- or more likely seven-card diamond suit. With the ace and queen in dummy, the suit is surely solid. Unless your side takes five tricks quickly, declarer will surely make two spades, six or seven diamonds and one club. This makes it no time for passive defence.

I suppose you could play partner to have led from A-Q-10-9-x. In that case, it would work either to let the ten run or to put up the king and return the suit. This is not a particularly likely holding in any event and here there are two specific clues on the matter. First, with no help in clubs at all, South might have rebid 4♦ rather than 3NT. Second, knowing that dummy would be stronger than declarer (and hence more likely to hold the king of clubs rather than the jack) partner might have led the queen of clubs from A-Q-10-9-x.

The best chance, surely, is to put up the king of clubs and, assuming it wins,

switch to the jack of hearts. If partner holds A-Q-x-x or, less likely (given the non-heart lead), A-K-x-x of hearts, you can make four heart tricks and two clubs to defeat the contract by two. If the king of clubs loses to the ace, you probably cannot beat the contract whatever you do.

This is the full deal:

♠ A K J 9 5 4						
♥ 10 7						
♦ A Q						
♣ J 5 4						
♠ 8 3		♠ Q 10 6 2				
♥ A Q 6 2		♥ J 9 4 3				
♦ 8 5		♦ 9 3				
♣ A 10 9 7 2		♣ K 6 3				
	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td><td style="padding: 2px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W</td><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	E	W	S	
N	E					
W	S					
	♠ 7					
	♥ K 8 5					
	♦ K J 10 7 6 4 2					
	♣ Q 8					

*Attacking or creating entries*

A busy or active defence does not always involve setting up or cashing winners quickly. While many of the possible active defences available in a suit contract (looking for or preventing ruffs, and forcing declarer, for instance) have no equivalent in a no-trump contract, attacking entries or creating them does remain possible.

♠ J 7 5					
♥ A 8					
♦ Q J 10 6 4 2					
♣ J 4					
	♠ A 4 3				
	♥ J 7 6 4				
	♦ 7 5				
	♣ K 9 6 3				
<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td><td style="padding: 2px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W</td><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	E	W	S	
N	E				
W	S				

The bidding, assuming that North-South play a weak no-trump opening, is as follows:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	Pass	1NT
Pass	3NT	End	

Partner leads the two of spades and you

win with the ace as South plays low.

Is this a time to be busy or not? If so, how?

The long diamond suit and sure entry in hearts tells you that this is the time to defend actively. The trickier question is *how* to defend actively.

If the lead is fourth highest, then a spade return is not an aggressive option. If you imagine that the king and queen of spades are split between the unseen hands, returning a spade will allow your side to make three spade tricks in all. For this to defeat the contract, partner will need a diamond stopper and a quick winner, which would need to be the ace of clubs, as well. The problem with this is that if South has 15 points, then West has at most 8. This rules out his having all three of those crucial cards: the queen of spades, the king of diamonds and the ace of clubs.

One aggressive but highly speculative option is to switch to the three of clubs. This would give you a chance of cashing four club tricks if partner has precisely the ace, queen and ten of clubs.

The final and best option is a heart switch. So long as partner has the king of hearts and three diamonds, this should kill dummy's diamond suit.

This is the full deal:

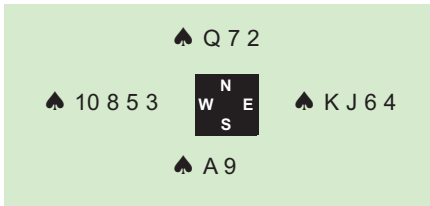
♠ J 7 5						
♥ A 8						
♦ Q J 10 6 4 2						
♣ J 4						
♠ Q 10 8 2		♠ A 4 3				
♥ K 10 3 2		♥ J 7 6 4				
♦ K 8 3		♦ 7 5				
♣ 10 7		♣ K 9 6 3				
	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td><td style="padding: 2px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W</td><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	E	W	S	
N	E					
W	S					
	♠ K 9 6					
	♥ Q 9 5					
	♦ A 9					
	♣ A Q 8 5 2					

Declarer may go up with the queen of hearts in a desperate attempt to preserve dummy's ace, in which case the contract will go several down.

If instead your opponent pays you the compliment of ducking (on the basis that, if you had the king of hearts, you would lead it rather than the four), the defenders still prevail. Declarer winds up with two heart tricks – one more than if you left the suit alone – but this is a price you are happy to pay to shut out the diamond suit.

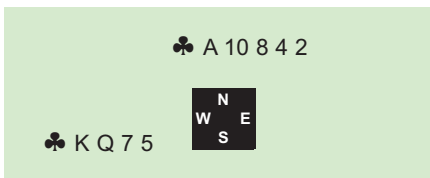
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## POTTAGE ON DEFENCE continued from page 26



Your side's entry situation can determine whether you should be active or passive. Suppose partner leads the three of spades to the two, jack and ace. If you gain the lead, you will have the choice of continuing spades or switching. The advantage of continuing the suit is that you can make sure of two spade tricks (a long spade as well as the king) if you gain the lead subsequently, whereas you may only make the king if you switch. The corollary is that switching works better if partner gains the lead next: then your side makes three spade tricks (assuming partner correctly leads the ten) and declarer only one. If you are unsure of the entry position, it is right to switch. For all you know, the queen of spades might be the extra trick declarer is looking for in order to make the contract.

### Other ways to be busy

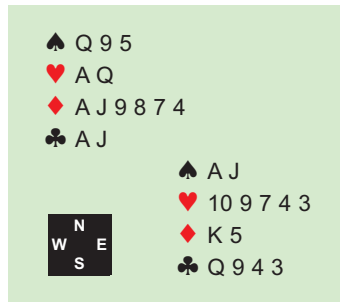


On occasion, you can be active or busy when *following* suit rather than leading. For a change, let us consider a layout from West's viewpoint. Suppose South leads the three. What do you do?

The passive play is low. This may save a trick if East has the singleton jack, a doubleton nine or J-9 doubleton. Playing low is most unlikely to help declarer to

set up and run the suit.

The busy play is high. This will probably make it easier for declarer to run the club suit, so this is something you do only when *fast* club tricks are what is at issue rather than *total* club tricks. If you need one fast club trick, or to stop declarer from making two fast club tricks, split your honours.



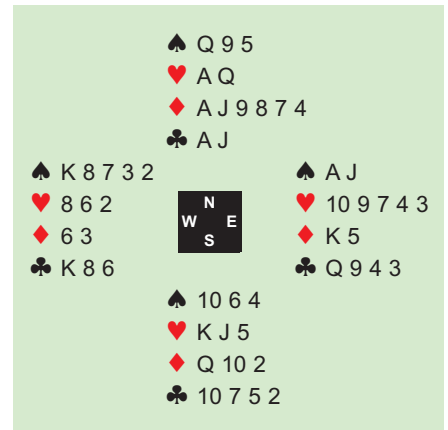
West	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	Pass	1NT
Pass	3NT	End	

Partner leads the three of spades and, when dummy plays low, you play the jack. This holds the trick and you return the ace, partner following with the two. How should you continue?

The passive option is to switch to a heart: if partner holds the king, declarer can finesse anyway. However, the menacing diamond suit in dummy suggests this is the time to be busy. You cannot attack dummy's entries – there are too many of them – but can you create one for partner? If, when you come in with the king of diamonds, you can give partner the lead, the rest of the spades will beat the contract.

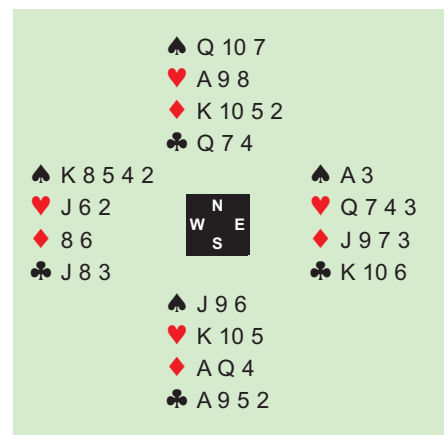
There is only one attacking option – to play partner for the king of clubs. Moreover, if you read the two of spades on the second round as a suit-preference signal for clubs, this is not such a long shot. Of course, if you lead a normal three of clubs, partner will play the king

to drive out dummy's ace. Then, unless partner holds the ten as well, you will have achieved little. A better bet is to lead the queen of clubs to set up the king as a winner. This is the full deal:



### A last example

Our final example offers two clues worth remembering. For a change, (and to save space!) we will see all four hands:

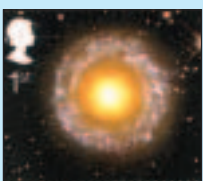


West	North	East	South
Pass	2NT	Pass	1NT
End			3NT

West leads the four of spades and East wins with the ace.

Here there are some strong clues for a passive defence. The first is the flat shape in the dummy, indicating a lack of easy tricks for declarer. The second is that the opponents have crawled into their final contract, telling you they have few values in reserve. Although East can tell that West cannot have an entry as well as good enough spades to set up, a spade return is clearly indicated. Unlike the risky switches to hearts or clubs, this can give nothing away. As the cards lie, it takes a safe spade return to beat the contract. ■

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